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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002495

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: DEPUTY SPEAKER ATTIYA HAS GAME-PLAN FOR PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

REF: BAGHDAD 2464

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert Ford for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Iraqi parliament deputy speaker Attiya told PolCouns on August 8 that he wanted to convene the special committee charged with finding a solution to the impasse on the Kirkuk-related article of the provincial elections law "immediately, tomorrow." He proposed a two-track approach to the problem: the committee works to find a compromise; meanwhile, Iraq's presidency council announces an elections date before the end of this year, using the 2005 elections law, if necessary. This, Attiya believes, would bring pressure on hard-line Sunni Arabs to compromise. Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi, who like Attiya is a member of the Shia Coalition, told the Ambassador on August 7 that it might be best to set an election date for the end of the year to focus minds. Attiya believes the UN should organize the work of the Kirkuk article committee, and we will follow up with the UN and the various political blocs. There may be some lifting involved to get that committee to meet: parliament speaker Mashadani and some other parliamentarians have told us that they doubt the Kirkuk article committee would meet at all during the month of August. End Summary.

Track One: Launch Committee

¶12. (C) On August 8, PolCouns met with Sheikh Khalid al-Attiya, second deputy speaker of the Council of Representatives (CoR), in Attiya's home. Asked how to proceed on provincial elections afQ the failure of the CoR to pass an elections law (reftel), Attiya proposed a two-track approach: first the special committee decreed by speaker MashadQ during the CoR's last seQon would work to find an acceptable formulation of Article 24 (on elections in Kirkuk). The basis of their work would be the UN-proposed short text that had almost resulted in agreement before the CoR adjourned.

¶13. (C) Attiya acknowledged that there were no concrete plans for the special committee to meet to discuss Article 24 further, and that the composition of the committee had not been settled. Attiya thought that some good choices for membership would be (Fouad Masum, Roush Shuweys, Hadi al-Amiri, Haider al-Abadi, both Ayad Samarai'e and Abdelkarim Samarai'e and Dhafir al-Ani). PolCouns urged Attiya himself to consider participating. Attiya said he was willing. Even if the above names were not all in Baghdad in August to work on the committee, Attiya was sure their political parties could appoint good representatives to tinker with the UN language in a small committee. Attiya emphasized several times that the UNAMI team had to take a strong role organizing and leading the committee's work.

Track Two: Use Old Law ?

¶4. (C) Meanwhile, Iraq's presidency council would announce an elections date for the end of this year. Attiya reasoned that announcing an elections date would put pressure on hard-line Sunni Arabs to compromise in the Article 24 committee's work. They had gained much in the UN compromise language, notably the assurance that the administrative status of Kirkuk would not change before elections there and that demographic records would be reviewed in determining voter lists. They would not want to lose their gains, Attiya predicted. Asked whether the Kurds might walk back some of their concessions, Attiya thought not -- especially, he said, looking PolCouns in the eye, if there was enough international pressure on them. Returning to the Sunni Arabs, Attiya said that the key was to break the unity of the 127 bloc, and his plan had a chance of doing that. PolCouns emphasized the importance of getting the agreement of all major Iraqi communities (a belief we know Attiya strongly shares). Attiya said that, if the presidency council announces an elections date, it will mean ipso facto that the Kurds, Sunni Arabs (through Sunni Arab vice president al-Hashimi) and Shia agree.

¶5. (C) If the committee could not reach agreement by mid-September, Attiya said, the 2005 elections law could be used. Although the elections would be on the basis of a closed list, Attiya argued that accepting this would be better than delaying elections too much. He noted that the 2005 law had some desirable features, notably a women's

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quota. He also pointed out that the 2005 law allows elections to be delayed in one or more governorates. This could be doubly useful, he said; first, it would allow elections everywhere to be delayed beyond the October 31 date specified in Law 21, until the end of the year; second, it would permit elections in Kirkuk to be delayed even further. PolCouns noted that many observers thought one of the big advantages of the new election law draft text was the open list system. He asked whether the 2005 law could be modified to incorporate open lists. Attiya thought that would be too hard and take too long, requiring three readings and the approval of the presidency council. If the choice was between having elections in 2008 and having open lists, Attiya came down, he said, on elections this year.

"Let's start tomorrow"

¶6. (C) Attiya said that he wanted to get the special committee going "immediately, tomorrow." The UN, he thought, should organize the committee, call the various factions. We will contact the UN as soon as possible to consult with them on Attiya's plan and to see whether it is feasible to bring together the special committee within the next few days. We will also be in touch with the political parties to urge that they appoint quality representatives.

Comment

¶7. (C) Parliament speaker Mashadani told emboffs August 7 evening that he doubted the parliament would convene in any emergency session in August, and Attiya was of the same view with us August 8. Attiya thinks the UN-led special committee to look at Kirkuk language could meet in August; Mashadani was dubious, as were some of the other parliamentarians we talked to on August 6 evening. Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi, who like Attiya is from the Shia Islamist Coalition, also threw out to the Ambassador on August 7 the idea of setting an election date for the end of the year and using the old election law if necessary. We also heard the idea

from the Kurdish negotiators during the marathon discussions about an Article 24 text. No doubt many - if not all - of the political party leaders would be happy to maintain that closed-list system from the 2005 election law and thus solidify their grips on their parties.

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